AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-23 (Cancelled)

24. (New) Inerting method for extinguishing a fire in a closed room ("target area") in which an oxygen content in the closed room is reduced within a given time (x) to a specific inerting level, wherein:

said inerting level is kept to a certain level within a given regulation range, in particular a re-ignition prevention level (R);

said inerting level corresponds to said re-ignition prevention level (R);

an upper threshold of oxygen content in the regulation range is smaller than or, at maximum, equal to said re-ignition prevention level (R);

the time (x) for lowering the oxygen content to said inerting level is preset; and

the time (x) for lowering the oxygen content to said inerting level is selected depending on a base inertization level at a time a flooding begins.

25. (New) Inerting method in accordance with Claim 24, wherein an amplitude of the oxygen content in the regulation range has a height of approximately 0.2% by volume.

26. (New) Inerting method in accordance with Claim 24, wherein the regulating of said oxygen content for lowering said oxygen content to said inerting level and/or for keeping said oxygen content at said re-ignition prevention level (R) is performed by taking into account said air exchange rate of the target area and/or a pressure difference between the target area and the environment.

27. (New) Inerting method in accordance with Claim 25, wherein the regulating of said oxygen content for lowering said oxygen content to said inerting level and/or for keeping said oxygen content at said re-ignition prevention level (R) is performed by taking into account an air exchange rate of the target area and/or a pressure difference between the target area and the environment.

28. (New) Inerting method in accordance with Claim 24, wherein a calculating of an amount of extinguishing agent for lowering said oxygen content to said inerting level and/or for keeping said oxygen content at said re-ignition prevention level (R) is performed by taking into account an air exchange rate of the target area and/or a pressure difference between the target area and the environment.

29. (New) Inerting method in accordance with Claim 26, wherein a calculating of an amount of extinguishing agent for lowering said oxygen content to the inerting level and/or for keeping said oxygen content at said re-ignition prevention level (R) is performed by taking into account the air exchange rate of the target area and/or the pressure difference between the target area and the environment.

30. (New) Inerting method in accordance with Claim 26, wherein the air exchange rate of the target area corresponds to an n_{50} value of the target area.

31. (New) Inerting method in accordance with Claim 24 in which lowering said oxygen content ensues by means of feeding an oxygen-displacing gas into the target area, wherein a regulating of a supply of the oxygen-displacing gas is performed by taking into account an air/gas pressure in the target area.

32. (New) Inerting method in accordance with Claim 26 in which lowering said oxygen content ensues by means of feeding an oxygen-displacing gas into the target area, wherein a regulating of a supply of the oxygen-displacing gas is performed by taking into account an air/gas pressure in the target area.

33. (New) Inerting method in accordance with Claim 24 in which lowering said oxygen content ensues by means of feeding an oxygen-displacing gas into the target area, wherein a regulating of a supply of the oxygen-displacing gas for lowering the oxygen content to said inerting level and/or for maintaining said oxygen content is performed by taking into account the base inertization level at the time the flooding begins.

34. (New) Inerting method in accordance with Claim 24 in which lowering said oxygen content ensues by means of feeding an oxygen-displacing gas into the target area, wherein a regulating of a supply of the oxygen-displacing gas is performed by taking into account either said current oxygen content or the current oxygen-displacing gas concentration, in the target area.

35. (New) Inerting method in accordance with Claim 24 in which lowering said oxygen content ensues by means of feeding an oxygen-displacing gas into the target area, wherein a regulating of a supply of the oxygen-displacing gas is performed by taking into account said oxygen content prior to beginning the lowering of said oxygen content to the specific inerting level.

36. (New) Inerting method in accordance with Claim 31, wherein the regulating of the supply of the oxygen-displacing gas is performed according to a specific flooding progress pattern.

37. (New) Inerting method in accordance with Claim 24, wherein said oxygen content in the target area is lowered by introduction of an oxygen-displacing gas from a reservoir.

38. (New) Inerting method in accordance with Claim 24 in which an oxygen-displacing gas is made available by means of a production system.

39. (New) Inerting method in accordance with Claim 24, wherein an oxygen-displacing gas for lowering said oxygen content to the specific inerting level is provided from a reservoir and the oxygen-displacing gas to keep the inerting level at said re-ignition prevention level (R) is provided from a production system.

40. (New) Inerting method in accordance with Claim 24, wherein said re-ignition prevention level (R) is determined by taking into account a characteristic fire load of the target area, especially dependent on a material present within the target area.

41. (New) Inerting method in accordance with Claim 24, wherein said re-ignition prevention level (R) is determined by taking into account any given equipment and/or machines present within the target area and their operating states.

42. (New) Inerting method in accordance with Claim 24, wherein any given equipment and/or machines present within the target area are brought into a pre-defined operational state prior to lowering said oxygen content to said specific inerting level.

43. (New) Inerting method in accordance with Claim 24 in which the lowering of said oxygen content in the target room begins at Time t_0 of an early fire detection.